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TAGS: NATO PREL MOPS MARR SP

SUBJECT: MOD SECRETARY GENERAL FOR DEFENSE POLICY CUESTA ON  
NATO SUMMIT

REF: MADRID 202

Classified By: DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION HUGO LLORENS, REASONS 1.4(B)(D).

¶1. (C) Deputy Chief of Mission Llorens met March 28 with MOD Secretary General for Defense Policy Luis Cuesta to discuss

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the Bucharest summit. He stressed the U.S. interest in enlargement (Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia) and our support for Georgian and Ukrainian aspirations to be part of the membership action plan (MAP) as well as hopes that Spain would increase its effort in Afghanistan and recognize Kosovo as soon as possible and maintain its commitment to KFOR and the EU efforts there.

¶2. (C) Cuesta noted enlargement and operations (Afghanistan and Kosovo) would be the grand themes of the summit. He said Spain hoped Croatia, Albania, and Macedonia would come as a "package," noting that Croatia had a great deal of progress and Albania could be a force for stability in the wake of Kosovo's declaration of independence. Cuesta said it would be a shame if the opportunity to include Macedonia were lost over a question of nomenclature. He said Spain was urging flexibility on both sides with respect to the name question. On Ukraine, Cuesta said Spain's view was that Ukrainian interest in MAP was positive and should be encouraged. Nevertheless, the GOU could make more progress in terms of democratic control of the security forces. He suggested Ukraine should be encouraged to do more (he mentioned Partnership for Peace), but said that if NATO consensus was in favor of MAP for Ukraine, Spain would support it. On Georgia, he said things were more complicated because of the frozen conflicts; however, Spain was ready to support the view of the "great majority" if it developed (which he doubted would happen). Cuesta agreed with the DCM that MAP could send a strong message to both countries on the need to continue to solidify reform, but he added that neither should be allowed to believe MAP was a guarantee of membership.

¶3. (C) On Afghanistan, Cuesta said the possible participation of the UNSYG at Bucharest was a positive factor. He noted that Spain would go to Bucharest with a caretaker government (the new Zapatero administration will not be formed until shortly after the summit). He said MOD Alonso's attendance was not certain (Alonso is leaving his post as MOD to assume an even higher visibility role as "super" spokesman for the government). If Alonso does not attend, Cuesta will go in his stead. He said Zapatero's stance in Bucharest would be that Spain welcomed development of a new strategy for Afghanistan that would emphasize the sorts of things Spain had been doing in terms of development and capacity building of Afghan forces. He mentioned a technical mission was headed to Afghanistan shortly to work on details of Spain's plans to build a FOB for an Afghan Army unit at Qal-e-Now.

While he said Zapatero would highlight the importance of this sort of contribution, Spain could not go much further at this time. Time was needed for selection of a new MOD and for that person to be briefed by the military chiefs and formulate plans. The DCM noted that the U.S. appreciated Spain's contributions to date but that clearly everyone was going to have to do more. He pressed the U.S. interest in having more Spanish police in Afghanistan, noting he had raised the topic with the Ministry of Interior (septel). Cuesta noted 11 countries had announced new contributions to the mission in Afghanistan, which Spain welcomed. He said Spain would certainly maintain its commitment, and while it was not able to augment it at this time, it was disposed to study the possibility of doing so.

¶4. (C) Turning to Kosovo, Cuesta said Spain was watching the situation closely. He noted while Spain did not support independence, it did support stability in the region and allied solidarity. He said Spain would remain engaged, but was careful to note that Spain would not support an extension of the KFOR mission beyond the objectives set out under UNSCR ¶1244. He said Spain would not contribute directly to new missions that supported independence (e.g., security force development), but left open the possibility that Spain could take on additional burdens within KFOR, freeing up other resources for use in support of missions that went beyond the KFOR mandate. He noted Spain was urging Belgrade to do all it could to prevent violence in Mitrovica. He said the situation appeared to be calming.

¶5. (C) On missile defense, Cuesta indicated Spain agreed there was a threat to which missile defense might be an answer. It was something the NAC should study and Spain would want to consider whatever such study revealed. On CFE and the U.S. and German efforts to get a statement out of the NAC before Bucharest, Cuesta said Spain viewed positively any effort that moved Russia to fulfill its commitments.

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